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ABSTRACT

This booklet, one in a series on aviation careers, outlines the career opportunities of airline flight attendants. General information about airline hiring policies for flight attendants are discussed, and the following information about the flight attendant job classification is provided: nature of the work, working conditions, where the jobs are, wages and benefits, opportunities for advancement, requirements to enter the job, opportunities for training, and the outlook for the future. A list of names and addresses of major airlines completes the booklet. (KC)

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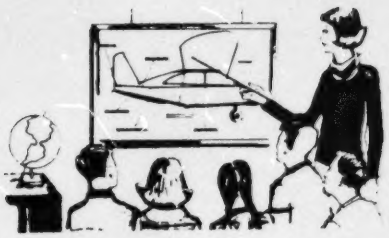

# AVIATION EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION/FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF AVIATION POLICY/WASHINGTON, D.C. 20591

Aviation Careers Series

## FLIGHT ATTENDANTS

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by
Walter Zaharevitz

(Revised April 1980)

GA-300-127

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Flight Attendants, both men and women, are employed to make the airline passengers' flight as safe, comfortable and enjoyable as possible. Although the majority of those hired by U.S. airlines are women, the airlines are hiring men as well as women, married persons as well as singles, and older as well as young people. It should be noted that the duties and working conditions are the same for men and women in the flight attendant category.

## NATURE OF THE WORK

The chief responsibility of a flight attendant involves the safety of the passengers and their evacuation in case of emergency. The routine duties include the following:

A. Preflight Duties

1. Attends preflight briefings by the captain to learn about expected weather conditions, special passenger problems, etc.
2. Checks passenger cabin and galleys before passengers board to see that all supplies, safety equipment and food are on board and in place.
3. Greets and directs passengers to their seats, assists mothers with young children and the elderly or handicapped.
4. Helps passengers stow hand luggage and coats.
5. Checks seat belts and observance of "No Smoking" signs.
6. Makes announcements over public address system regarding weather, altitude, estimated flight time, etc.
7. Demonstrates use of safety equipment.

B. Inflight Duties

1. Distributes reading material, pillows and blankets to passengers requesting them.
2. Serves refreshments and meals to passengers and crew.
3. Gives first aid to uncomfortable or ill passengers.
4. Answers passengers' questions and reassures the apprehensive traveler.
5. Takes special care of unaccompanied children.

C. Postflight Duties

1. Makes necessary reports such as minor medication given to passengers, lost and found articles, cabin and equipment conditions needing attention and numerous other matters that may require reporting.

2. If required by the airline, may do some tidying chores such as folding blankets, wiping off the buffets, straightening curtains, etc.

In addition to flight duties, flight attendants are sometimes called upon to make public relations appearances for the airlines during Career Days at high schools, at United Givers Fund campaigns, at sales meetings, conventions and other goodwill occasions.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Flight attendants' regular place of work is in the passenger cabin of an airliner. They fly from 75 to 85 hours a month. In addition, they have about 50 hours a month duty time between flights and must be present for the captain's briefing at least an hour before flight time. At the end of the flight, the flight attendant may have reports to complete. The total monthly working time, in most cases, is determined by agreements between the airline and the union.

The flight attendant's working day has irregular hours and is determined by the flight to which assigned. If the flight leaves at 5 a.m., the flight attendant is expected to report to the captain by 4 a.m. The maximum number of flying hours per day is also set by union agreement and on-duty time is usually limited to 12 hours per day with a maximum of 14 hours on duty per day. Under this arrangement, the flight attendants can sometimes accomodate the maximum of 85 flight hours monthly rather quickly and thus flight assignments are spread over the month, giving them consecutive days off. Over a year's time, each flight attendant averages about 156 days off, not counting partial days off before and after trips. (The average office worker has 96 days off and eight-hour working days the rest of the time.) Flight attendants frequently work at night and on weekends and holidays. They may choose (or bid for) flights, but the final assignment is determined by seniority. The longer the flight attendant is employed, the higher his or her seniority, and the more likely she or he is to work on chosen flights.

Flight assignments usually require overnight stays in cities away from home base. Under these circumstances, flight attendants are given hotel accommodations and travel allowances for meal expenses and transportation.

Flight attendants are required to buy uniforms and wear them while on duty. Uniform replacement items are usually paid for by the company. The uniform is made to measure, and is designed by top names in the fashion world to look like a coordinated, stylist wardrobe, rather than a work-a-day uniform. Usually a small monthly allowance is given by the airline to cover cleaning and upkeep of uniforms.

The flight attendants' inflight duties require them to be on their feet most of the time. They frequently work at top speed to accomplish all the tasks that must be done within the few hours of flight. At times, they must serve meals and pour beverages under rough or uncomfortable flying conditions (no hot beverages are served in turbulent air). They must deal pleasantly with all kinds of people, some of whom can be annoying and demanding.

Depending upon seniority, the flight attendant may be under the direction of a senior flight attendant, or one may direct the work of a junior flight attendant. Flight attendants may also be required to give elaborate service to a small number of first class passengers, or less elaborate but substantial service to a larger number of tourist-class passengers.

## WHERE THE JOBS ARE

Flight attendants are employed by every airline and are based, or "domiciled" at major cities along the airline's routes and at the airline's headquarters city. In general, flight attendants work out of major airline centers such as New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, Denver, Atlanta, Boston, Washington, D. C., Kansas City, Detroit, Seattle and Dallas/Fort Worth.

## WAGES AND BENEFITS

Depending upon the size of the airline and (in most cases) union negotiations, salaries range from $8,000 to $17,000 per year. Salary increases are given at regular six-month and/or twelve-month intervals.

Usually a guaranteed monthly salary is paid for a minimum number of base hours ranging from 65 to 85, depending upon union agreements. For every hour flown above the minimum guarantee, extra incentive payments are made on an hourly basis. Flight attendants on international flights usually earn higher salaries than those on domestic flights.

The majority of flight attendants are represented by one of the following unions:

Association of Flight Attendants
Teamsters (IBT)
Air Transport Division of the Transport Workers Union of America
Several airline groups have company unions (such as the Association of Professional Flight Attendants)

A flight attendant has the same benefits as other airline employees, such as paid vacation and sick leave, greatly reduced travel for self and immediate family, paid medical and life insurance, retirement plans, credit unions, employee suggestion plans with cash awards, and reduced air fares on other airlines. With the time and low fares at their disposal, flight attendants can afford to vacation almost anywhere in the world. In addition, flight attendants enjoy the good opinion of the general public, who looks upon them as attractive, mature personalities with glamorous jobs.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT

After successfully completing the training course, new flight attendants begin work on a probation basis for six months. During this time, they are on call to work on extra flights or as replacements for flight attendants who are ill or on vacation. Their work is observed and directed by a senior flight attendant. In time, they can become a Senior Flight Attendant, directing other flight attendants on the flight. Also, they may work into positions as Supervising Flight Attendants, flight attendant supervisors, instructors, or other attractive positions in the company. If desired, they may be considered for such positions as a reservations or ticket sales agent, or work in public relations, sales or personnel recruiting, depending upon qualifications for these positions. Their experience as flight attendants qualify them for numerous jobs where contact with the public is involved.

Advancement as a flight attendant is stablizing because the past average tenure of two years is now more than seven years and increasing. The flight attendant job is now being viewed as a profession for career-minded individuals.

REQUIREMENTS TO ENTER THE JOB

A. Physical: The following description by one airline is typical. Applicants must be at least 20 years old, in good health, with pleasant and attractive appearance. Men must be between 5'2" and 6'0" and women between 5'2" and 6'0". Weight must be in proportion to height. Vision must be 20/40 or better uncorrected or 20/300 or better, if corrected to at least 20/40 with contact lenses or glasses.

B. Personality: Poised, mature, emotionally stable, outgoing and a good conversationalist.

C. Marital Status: Married men and women with children are eligible, as are those widowed and divorced, provided they can qualify otherwise.

D. Education: High school graduation is a minimum. Most airlines prefer at least two years of college or business experience involving public contact. Many flight attendants are college graduates.

E. Other: Good English usage is required. A clean and wholesome rather than a glamorous appearance is desired. Airlines with international routes usually require fluency in one or more foreign languages, such as French, Spanish and German.

Airlines' needs for flight attendants vary. If an applicant is not accepted by one airline, she or he may still be accepted by another. Thus, it is a good idea to contact several air carriers.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING

Airlines operate flight attendant training programs on a continuing basis or as needed. The larger airlines have schools with campus-like facilities for training flight attendants. Among the airlines, training periods range from two weeks to six and a half weeks (the average is four weeks). Trainees learn about the theory of flight, the parts of an airliner and their functions, airline language, air traffic control, emergency and safety procedures, evacuation, first aid, airline routes and regulations, serving methods, and a host of other details related to their work and to the air transport industry in general. Courses are also provided in personal grooming and weight control. Board, room and school supplies are provided free, or payments are made to cover these costs. Free air transportation is provided from the trainees' home to the school. The value of the airlines' flight attendant training program amounts to several thousand dollars per student.

Some schools and colleges offer flight attendant training that may give a candidate some advantage. However, airlines insist that such trained candidates still need to complete the airlines' flight attendant training program. Therefore, it is advisable for the candidate to check with the airlines for their policies regarding prior training.

OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

The outlook for career opportunities with the airlines is directly related to airline growth. Airline growth is usually measured by an increase in traffic: an increase in passenger-miles and an increase in ton-miles of freight. Last year (1979) was another record year for the airlines and future growth looks bright.

A Gallup Poll of November 1977 reported 63 percent of all adult Americans had flown aboard commercial airlines, compared to 33 percent only 15 years ago.

The airlines are now at work planning for an air transportation system which the Federal Aviation Administration estimates will be carrying more than 400 million passengers just a decade from now; in 1978 they carried more than 280 million passengers.

The airlines are presently hiring -- in fact, advertising for -- flight attendants because of the passenger traffic growth, increased number of flights, and the expanding route systems as a result of the recent deregulation. One airline plans to hire between 800 and 900 flight attendants in 1979; another about 1,000. Although the job opportunities for flight attendants are excellent, the competition for these jobs will continue to be fierce. One airline reports it is currently receiving 10,000 applications per month. Another airline indicates that it accepts about an average of one out of 123 applicants.

AIRLINES: The airlines listed below are members of the Air Transport Association. This list should be used as a starting point for job-seekers. Some airlines may not be listed. In addition, some commuter, supplemental, intra-state and/or charter airlines also employ flight attendants. Look in the yellow pages of your telephone book or contact your local airport to check on these possible opportunities.

AIR CALIFORNIA
3636 Birch Street
Newport Beach, California 92660

AIR FLORIDA
3900 N.W. 79th Avenue
Suite 501
Miami, Florida 33166

AIR NEW ENGLAND
Logan International Airport
East Boston, Massachusetts 02128

ALASKA AIRLINES
Seattle-Tacoma International Airport
Seattle, Washington 98188

ALLEGHENY AIRLINES
Washington National Airport
Washington, D. C. 20001

ALOHA AIRLINES
P. O. Box 30028
Honolulu International Airport
Honolulu, Hawaii 96820

AMERICAN AIRLINES
633 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10017

BRANIFF INTERNATIONAL
World Headquarters
Braniff Boulevard
Dallas-Ft. Worth Airport
Dallas, Texas 75261

CONTINENTAL AIRLINES
Los Angeles International Airport
Los Angeles, California 90009

DELTA AIR LINES
Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport
Atlanta, Georgia 30320

EASTERN AIR LINES
Miami International Airport
Miami, Florida 33148

THE FLYING TIGER LINE
7401 World Way West
Los Angeles, California 90009

FRONTIER AIRLINES
8250 Smith Road
Denver, Colorado 80207

HAWAIIAN AIRLINES
P. O. Box 30008
Honolulu International Airport
Honolulu, Hawaii 96820

HUGHES AIRWEST
San Francisco International Airport
San Francisco, California 94128

NATIONAL AIRLINES
Box 592055
Airport Mail Facility
Miami, Florida 33159

NORTH CENTRAL AIRLINES
7500 Northliner Drive
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55450

NORTHWEST AIRLINES
Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport
St. Paul, Minnesota 55111

OZARK AIR LINES
Lambert Field
St. Louis, Missouri 63145

PAN AMERICAN WORLD AIRWAYS
Pan Am Building
New York, New York 10017

PIEDMONT AIRLINES
Smith Reynolds Airport
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27102

PSA-PACIFIC SOUTHWEST AIRLINES
3225 North Harbor Drive
San Diego, California 92101

SOUTHERN AIRWAYS
Hartsfield-Atlanta International Airport
Atlanta, Georgia 30320

TEXAS INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES
P. O. Box 12788
Houston, Texas 77017

TRANS WORLD AIRLINES
605 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10016

UNITED AIRLINES
P. O. Box 66100
Chicago, Illinois 60666

WESTERN AIR LINES
P. O. Box 92005
World Way Postal Center
Los Angeles, California 90009

WIEN AIR ALASKA
4100 International Airport Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Associate Members

AIR CANADA
One Place Ville Marie, 41st Floor
Montreal, P.Q., Canada H3B 3P7

CP AIR
One Grant McConachie Way
Vancouver International Airport
B.C., Canada V7B 1V1



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